



*From the desk of*  
**Representative Jim Moeller**

*February 2006*



**D**ear Neighbor:

Times flies, no doubt about it. Although it seems as if we just closed the book on the 2005 Legislature, we've already opened the 2006 Legislature.

I'm writing today to preview issues where I'll invest most of my work this session. Now, I say this every letter — and I mean it every letter: Please don't hesitate to contact me whenever you have questions or concerns about what's up in the state capital. Thank you for taking part in your state government!

Take care,

A handwritten signature of Jim Moeller in black ink.

**Jim Moeller**  
State Representative  
49<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



## ✓ **Preparation and Peace of Mind for Washington Families:**

*Simply put, disaster readiness means thinking ahead about the unthinkable.*

---

**W**e've lost hundreds of fellow citizens in natural disasters over the past several months. Sooner or later, a natural or manmade disaster will strike the Pacific Northwest. Three legislative panels – the House State Government Operations and Accountability Committee, the House Local Government Committee, and the Senate Government Operations and Elections Committee – met throughout the fall to explore the ins and outs of emergency preparedness.

I worked to ensure that these committees met in Southwest Washington in order to give our local agencies an opportunity to participate. **Local and state agencies must be on the same page in preparing for – and dealing with – disaster.** We saw only too clearly in New Orleans what happens when there is no coordination between governmental agencies.

**Along the same lines, Washington State is completely unprepared for a possible avian flu outbreak.** The so-called “bird flu” is not the “take two aspirin, drink plenty of fluids and come back to work in a week” kind of bug. This is the 1918 variety flu — with a mortality rate of 50%.

The Bush Administration's response has been to appropriate a billion dollars for development of a vaccine. They hope to have 20,000 doses in two years...there are over 400,000 citizens in Clark County alone. Do the math.

I will be asking the legislature for \$20 million this session to help local health districts plan and prepare for an outbreak (House Bill 2542). We need to develop procedures for quarantine when the hospitals become overwhelmed. Local communities need to plan how to maintain public infrastructure such as water, power, and sanitation should essential personnel become sick. All of this takes time, staff, and money.

**But don't panic!** The medical community has learned a great deal since 1918, through the management of other viral epidemics such as the SARS outbreak - a quick, coordinated response by local health authorities helped to keep SARS from spreading around the world. We need to be prepared to do the same in our communities. **This is why we need the appropriation NOW.**

For information about disaster preparation and related topics, you might want to check these Web sites: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org), [www.vanfire.org](http://www.vanfire.org), [www.auxpa.org](http://www.auxpa.org), [www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov), [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov), [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov), [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org), [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov), and [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com).



## ✓ **Child Safety:**

*Safe Kids Act boosts secure gun storage to head off tragedies*

---

**A**gain this session, I'll be sponsoring the Safe Kids Act (House Bill 1473) to promote appropriate storage of firearms. My plan says that a person would be guilty of reckless endangerment if he or she leaves a loaded firearm in a location where the person knows (or reasonably should know) that a child is likely to gain access — and a child does in fact get possession of the firearm.

In 2000, a Department of Health study reported that more than 560,000 Washington children lived in households with guns. The department also reported that 27,000 kids lived in homes where there was a loaded

and/or unlocked gun. Many other states have passed measures for safe storage of firearms. **It is now time for us to step up to the plate and protect our kids.**

My bill would ensure that a gun dealer must offer to sell or give the purchaser a lockbox, a gun safe, a lock, or some other device that prevents the firearm from firing. A gun business would have to post this sign: "It is unlawful to store or leave an unsecured, loaded firearm where a child can and does obtain possession."

I believe in the 2nd Amendment. I own guns myself. A gun is a powerful tool. It can protect you and your family, it can help feed you. I also believe that when you own a gun you have a responsibility to those around you to be safe with it. In other words, use some common sense such as: alcohol and guns don't mix, keep them out of the hands of criminals and ***keep them out of the reach of children.***



## ✓ **End-of-life Planning:**

*Let's protect the dignity of our loved ones - and ourselves*

---

**I** will be proposing a statewide registry on advanced directives also known as living wills. It has been several months since the Terry Schiavo case brought the issue of end-of-life planning to the forefront of national debate. In the months since, we have had time to reflect upon the issue in both our personal lives as well as in our roles as statewide policymakers.

**I have spent a lot of time meeting with health care stakeholders and considering several options related to end-of-life issues.** One project I'm working on is the creation of a statewide registry for advanced health directives (House Bill 2342). Advanced Directives include such things as medical durable powers of attorney, advanced mental health directives and POLST (Physician Orders of Life Sustaining Treatment).

The state Department of Health would maintain the registry, and Washington residents could deposit their advance directives in an electronically-maintained central registry where health care personnel and facilities would have access to the information as necessary. **It would be free to all Washingtonians and protect both our health care wishes *and* our dignity.**



## ✓ **Justice**

*A fair, commonsense policy ensuring civil rights. Is this the year?*

---

**I** strongly believe that a Washington free from discrimination and bigotry should be a statewide value. Again this year we will try to pass the Anti-Discrimination Bill.

The proposal put forth by House Bill 2661 has been before the Legislature for decades and says that discrimination based on sexual orientation is – and should be – illegal.

If the bill finally passes, discrimination in housing, employment, financial transactions and insurance would be prohibited. For example, House Bill 2661 bars a landlord from refusing to issue or renew a lease because of sexual orientation — or because of gender, marital status, or a handicapping condition.

**The Anti-Discrimination Bill is supported by a diverse coalition of religious, civic, humanitarian, business and professional organizations.** Some of the state's most respected companies – including Boeing, Microsoft,

Starbucks Coffee Co., and Safeco – have already adopted similar policies. Furthermore, similar anti-discrimination measures have already been adopted in 13 other states as well as in the District of Columbia.

In the last couple of years, the House has passed the bill with a wide margin. Supporters in the Senate finally brought it to the floor last session, where it sadly fell short by one vote. However, with Sen. Bill Finkbeiner's announcement that he will vote for the bill this session, I'm encouraged that 2006 is the year we will finally pass it. I assure you that regardless of the final vote — ***I will never stop in my commitment to pass this legislation.***

In a related effort, some of you may remember my leadership several years ago, while on the Vancouver City Council, to create a Clark County Human Rights Commission. The voters turned down that proposal because at that time the State Human Rights Commission was sending an investigator to Clark County on a monthly basis — however, that practice was quietly discontinued by the HRC over three years ago. During the last few years, over 300 claims have been made to the HRC from Southwest Washington. That means that several times a month someone from Clark County had to drive 200 miles to file a claim. **I am going to be working hard to secure the funding needed to bring an HRC investigator back to our community on a regular basis.**



## ✓ **Your Health:**

*It's time to improve the quality of Washington milk*

**A**nother area I will be focusing on this session is elimination of the procedure known as “Cow Share” for selling raw milk (House Bill 2598). Several weeks ago, dozens of Clark County citizens, including children, were sickened – some severely – by drinking raw (non-pasteurized) milk. It's legal to sell raw milk in Washington if you have a license. The dairy where the milk came from was not licensed to sell raw milk but claimed they broke no law as their customers purchased “shares” in a milk cow. That makes the milk a “dividend” from their investment in the cow. So technically they did not “sell” raw milk. This loophole needs to be closed.

**You know, consumers should be able to make informed decisions on what they eat and drink.** You rely on government to ensure that all common sanitation procedures have been followed to assure a safe product. It's time for the government to take this responsibility seriously.

**Thank you again for taking the time to read this letter. If you have questions about these or any other issues, please do not hesitate to call my office.**



*For more information — or to express your comments:*

**Representative Jim Moeller**

**Telephone: 693-0804** (local) or 360-786-7872 (Olympia) ♦ **Legislative Hotline:** 1-800-562-6000

**TDD** (for hearing-impaired citizens): 1-800-635-9993 ♦ **E-mail:** moeller.jim@leg.wa.gov

**Address:** PO Box 40600, Olympia, WA 98504